

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

Cora J. Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff R. Regnart, Director



Contact:

Jeremy Botz, Gillnet Area Management Biologist
Tommy Sheridan, Seine Area Management Biologist
Amanda Wiese, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 424-3212 Fax: (907) 424-3235

Prince William Sound Area Office
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Cordova, AK 99574-0669
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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #53

SEINE FISHERIES: Eggtakes are underway at SGH, with approximately 41% of the final goal completed through August 10. A pink salmon cleanup fishery at the head of Port Valdez is possible upon completion of VFDA's eggtake operations, with time and area to be announced at a future date.

PWSAC completed its pink salmon cost recovery program on July 31, and reports a current cumulative mid-range hatchery escapement estimate of approximately 650,000 pink salmon at AFK, CCH, and WNH. Based on recent sex ratio sampling results for the Coghill, Northern, and Southwestern districts, PWSAC expects a cumulative hatchery escapement in excess of 725,000 pink salmon.

ADF&G sampling of CPF harvest from the Northern, Coghill, and Southwestern districts on August 10 resulted in estimated sex ratios of 52% female, 58% female, and 55% female, respectively. ADF&G sampling of pink salmon harvested in the Eastern, Coghill, and Southwestern districts on July 30 resulted in an average weight of approximately 2.8 pounds per fish. Final harvest numbers for the August 11 fishery in Prince William Sound are unavailable at the time of this announcement; however, it is estimated that at least 7.79 million pink salmon were harvested from August 9 through August 11 using this average weight. Cumulative pink salmon harvest totals for Prince William Sound through August 11 include approximately 1.8 million VFDA cost recovery fish, 1.7 million PWSAC cost recovery fish, and an estimated 65.2 million CPF fish.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District, **excluding the WNH HEEZ**, will open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET and PURSE SEINE fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13, and Wednesday, August 14. The HEEZ consists of the waters of the SHA north of a latitude line at 60°47.78'N.

Waters of the Coghill District, **including waters of the WNH SHA up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier net**, will open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET and PURSE SEINE fishing for a 14-hour fishing period beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Thursday, August 14. Pink salmon harvest estimates for recent Coghill District CPFs include 257,000 on August 8; 469,000 on August 9; 513,000 on August 10. There were 105 purse seine and 335 gillnet deliveries reported for these periods.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Waters of Port Valdez east of 146° 23.00' W Long., will be closed to commercial fishing during these periods. **Fishery participants are advised to avoid vessel salvage operations in the vicinity of 60°07' N., 146°33.59' W., which is approximately 4 miles from the Port of Valdez near Shoup Bay.** Waters of Port Valdez will close to commercial fishing upon completion of Thursday's period. A pink salmon cleanup fishery at the head of Port Valdez is possible upon completion of VFDA's eggtake operations, with time and area to be announced at a future date. Harvest estimates for the August 10 Eastern District CPF include 51,000 pink and 18 coho salmon, with 6 deliveries reported. Pink salmon harvest numbers for the August 9 Eastern District CPF are confidential. There was no harvest reported from the August 8 Eastern District CPF.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: Waters of the Montague District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Pink salmon harvest numbers for the August 8 and August 10 Montague District CPFs are confidential. There was no harvest reported from the August 9 Montague District CPF.

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northern District, **excluding waters of the Cannery Creek Subdistrict north of 60°58.00' N.**, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Pink salmon harvest estimates for recent Northern District CPFs include 652,000 on August 8, with 56 deliveries; 576,000 on August 9, with 45 deliveries; 647,000 on August 10, with 48 deliveries.

NORTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northwestern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Pink salmon harvest numbers for the August 8 and August 9 Northwestern District CPFs are confidential. There were no harvests reported for the August 10 Northwestern District CPF.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Pink salmon harvest estimates for recent Southeastern District CPFs include 141,000 on August 5, with 14 deliveries, and 61,300 on August 6, with 5 deliveries. There were no harvests reported for the August 8 through August 10 Southeastern District CPFs.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southwestern District, **excluding the AFK SHA**, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 14-hour fishing periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, August 13; Wednesday, August 14; and Thursday, August 15. Harvest estimates for recent Southwestern District CPFs include 1.43 million pink and 52 sockeye salmon on August 8, with 116 deliveries; 1.30 million pink and 37 sockeye salmon on August 9, with 105 deliveries; 1.50 million pink and 37 sockeye salmon on August 10, with 136 deliveries.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to occur by 2:00 pm Wednesday, August 14.

Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time in season either establishing an additional period or extending an open period.

Announcement recordings are available for **gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, in season harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure that they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does **not** exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.
- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel, but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized. **All MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.**

Please reference http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species). Under the ESA, take means to “harass, harm, pursue,

hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. “ 16U.S.C. 1532(19); and harass means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NMFS at 907-271-5006.